

~~UNCLASSIFIED~~ 10/31/79
Department of State

OUTGOING
TELEGRAM

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Argentina

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

STATE 284418

ROME FOR VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 12865: RDS 10/30/89 (STROMAYER, JAMES)

TAGS: SHUM, AR, VT

SUBJECT: SEVENTH WAGNER TRIP: ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS
PROBLEM

REF: ROME 29953

1. ACCOUNTING FOR DISAPPEARED PERSONS

A. BACKGROUND: ACCOUNTING FOR THE SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISAPPEARED IN RECENT YEARS HAS SO FAR PROVEN THE LEAST TRACTABLE OF ARGENTINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS. GENERAL VIOLA, A MEMBER OF THE RULING JUNTA, RECENTLY REAFFIRMED TO OUR AMBASSADOR THAT A SOLUTION IS UNLIKELY. THE INTERAMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, WHICH VISITED ARGENTINA FOR TWO WEEKS IN SEPTEMBER, RECEIVED THE SAME ANSWER FROM THE GOVERNMENT. THERE IS ABUNDANT EVIDENCE THAT MOST OF THE DISAPPEARANCES RESULTED FROM ACTION BY ARGENTINE SECURITY FORCES IN THE COUNTER-SUBVERSION CAMPAIGN. PUBLICLY, THE GOA HAS SAID VERY LITTLE. IN A SPEECH A FEW MONTHS AGO, VIOLA'S REFERENCE TO THE DISAPPEARED AS "THOSE WHO WILL BE ABSENT FOREVER", CAUSED CONSTERNATION AMONG FAMILIES OF THE

MISSING AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS. A DECREE-LAW PROMULGATED IN SEPTEMBER PERMITTED RELATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT TO INITIATE PROCEEDINGS TO DECLARE A MISSING PERSON LEGALLY DEAD AFTER A 90 DAY ABSENCE. THIS LAW APPARENTLY WAS THE PRIMARY CAUSE FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S RECENT CONDEMNATION OF ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

B. SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

-- WE VERY MUCH APPRECIATED HOLY FATHER'S OCTOBER 28 SPEECH (REFTEL) DEALING WITH DISAPPEARED PERSONS IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE AND HOPE THE HOLY SEE CAN TAKE EVEN FURTHER STEPS TO HELP RESOLVE THIS TERRIBLE PROBLEM.

-- DIRECT HIGH-LEVEL APPROACHES TO THE GOA BY THE PAPAL NUNCIO IN BUENOS AIRES COULD BE HELPFUL IN UNDERSCORING VATICAN CONCERN FOR THE MISSING AND THEIR FAMILIES.

-- SOME RELATIVES OF DISAPPEARED PERSONS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT, SINCE THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO PROVIDE A DIRECT PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ACCOUNTING TO THE FAMILIES, SUCH AN ACCOUNTING MIGHT BE MADE PRIVATELY THROUGH

AN INTERMEDIARY SUCH AS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

-- WHILE WE DO NOT KNOW HOW THE GOA OR THE CHURCH IN ARGENTINA WOULD REACT TO SUCH A PROPOSAL, IT SEEMS WORTH EXPLORING WITH BOTH PARTIES AS A POSSIBLE WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT DILEMMA.

2. THE ROLE OF THE ARGENTINE CHURCH IN HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS.

A. BACKGROUND

IN RECENT MONTHS, THE BISHOPS OF ARGENTINA HAVE BEGUN TO DEAL MORE VIGOROUSLY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, BOTH PUBLICLY AND, WE UNDERSTAND, PRIVATELY IN CONTACTS WITH THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE CONTINUING SERIOUSNESS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION SUGGESTS THAT A MORE STRUCTURED, SUSTAINED EFFORT COULD BE HELPFUL. WE WONDER, FOR EXAMPLE, WHETHER THE ARGENTINE BISHOPS WOULD BE PREPARED TO ESTABLISH AND SUPPORT AN ORGANIZATION ALONG THE LINES OF CHILE'S

VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY, WHICH WAS AWARDED THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR ITS WORK ON BEHALF OF HUMAN RIGHTS. VATICAN EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR SUCH AN UNDERTAKING MIGHT PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE STIMULUS TOWARD THIS END.

B. SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

-- WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THE MORE VIGOROUS APPROACH TAKEN BY THE ARGENTINE HIERARCHY ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN RECENT MONTHS.

-- GIVEN THE CONTINUING SEVERITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS IN ARGENTINA, WE HOPE THE CHURCH WILL MAINTAIN AND EVEN INCREASE ITS EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF POLITICAL DETAINEES, DISAPPEARED PERSONS AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND OTHER VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE.

-- WE HAVE NOTED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SANTIAGO VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY IN ATTEMPTING TO AMELIORATE SIMILAR PROBLEMS IN CHILE AND WONDER WHETHER THE VATICAN BELIEVES IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO ENCOURAGE THE ARGENTINE BISHOPS TO ESTABLISH A SIMILAR ORGANIZATION FOR THE SAME PURPOSES.

-- SUCH AN ORGANIZATION COULD PROVIDE THE CHURCH WITH AN ONGOING FRAMEWORK, WITHIN WHICH TO FOCUS ITS CONCERNS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA, AND WITH A CENTRAL POINT OF CONTACT IN THE CHURCH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VICTIMS AND THEIR RELATIVES. IT COULD, FOR EXAMPLE, ACT AS AN INTERMEDIARY FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE DISAPPEARED.

-- SUCH A STRUCTURE COULD PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE MEANS, UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE BISHOPS, FOR MOBILIZING THE INTEREST AND RESOURCES OF BOTH CLERGY AND LAITY TO WORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS. VANCE

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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